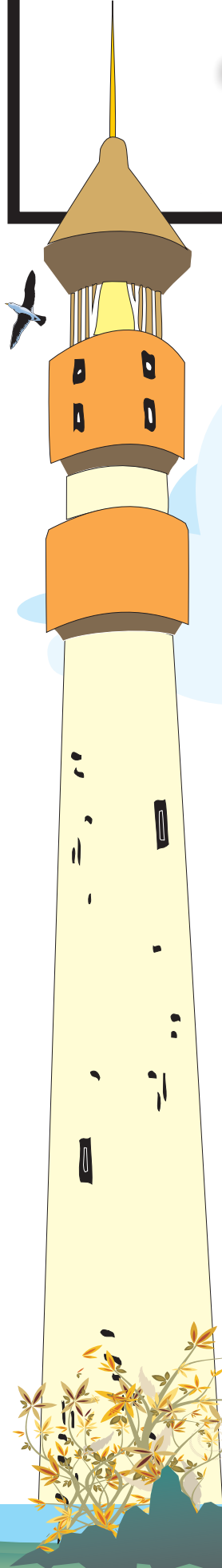


December 2022

The Lighthouse

Immanuel, God With Us

Assistant Pastor Shannon Philio



One of my favorite songs on K-Love (107.1 FM in Biloxi) is a song by Kari Jobe entitled *I Am Not Alone*, a song I encourage each of you to listen to or watch on YouTube. She sings of our Lord, “You’re my strength. You’re my defender. You’re my refuge in the storm. Through these trials, You’ve always been faithful. You bring healing to my soul. I am not alone. I am not alone. You will go before me. You will never leave me.” What a great reminder of God’s presence. We love to receive presents, but this Christmastime, I encourage you to receive and welcome God’s *presence*.

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means “God with us.” (Matthew 1:23, Isaiah 7:14). The name Immanuel comes from three Hebrew words, *im* meaning *with*, *anu* meaning *us*, and *el* meaning *God*. No matter how dark a path you might be walking, no matter how challenging and difficult to see what lies ahead, Jesus always shines brighter than any Bethlehem winter-night’s deep darkness you might be facing. Jesus always shines brighter than that brilliant, glorious star that led the magi to Him. You are not alone. God is with you. “Rejoice, Rejoice, Immanuel *has* come to thee, O Israel.”

Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophesy in Isaiah 7:14, a chapter in which Isaiah reminds wicked Ahaz, king of Judah, God would help and be with His people through some pretty dark and scary times. That

message is sung in *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* whose first verse reveals to us that Jesus is Emmanuel, the Son of God Who has ransomed captive Israel. In the second verse of the carol *Angels, from the Realm of Glory*, we are reminded of this great news that God is with us, “Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o’er your flocks by night, God with man is now residing, yonder shines the infant Light.” Jesus is the Light of the world (John 8:12) Who promises to be *with us* unto the ends of this age, unto the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:20). As you see all the many lights on the homes and trees along the Gulf Coast this Christmas, may those lights remind you that God is with you, that you are not alone.

The better question really isn’t, “Is God with you?” He is! The more important question to ask yourself this Christmas and upcoming New Year is, “Am I with God?” “Joy to the world! The Lord is come; let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing.” Will you prepare room in your hearts for Jesus this Christmas since He has prepared room for you in His? In the hustle and bustle of this season, will you set aside time to be with Him? “Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown when Thou camest to earth for me; but in Bethlehem’s home was there found no room, for Thy holy nativity. O come to my heart, Lord Jesus, there is room in my heart for Thee!”

Rejoice. God, is with you. The best presents you can receive this Christmas is the Lord’s presence. You are not alone. You are not alone.



Dear Friends and Family

We pray that you are all well as you approach this holiday season. We have much to give praise for and much that we want to share with you. Harvest was an exciting time for us here in Burkina Faso. We have been utilizing our church to train the

members in small scale farming. From our first year of training, we had trained nearly 100 people in Foundation For Farming in Burkina Faso. And eight different members or friends of our church started their own “till free” farms and they’ve sent us many pictures of their successful crops. It turned into a challenge to see who could grow the tallest corn, and I must admit they all did better than I did at my first attempt to grow corn. We did manage to feed over 40 people that came to our training with the corn and black-eyed peas from our own farm, and we were all encouraged by that.

Back in September, Fort Worth Presbyterian Church sent out a short-term team, Andy and Ian, to train locals on how to dig a well with only locally produced equipment. They received their training from an organization called Water for All International. When they arrived, we began to gather supplies for building our first rig. We then ran a course training the locals to dig a well without any machines. After a slow, difficult start and making modifications as we went, we dug a 35-foot practice well. Several members of our church want to take advantage of the training and start a well digging company. Next week they will attempt to dig their first solo well at our church. Please pray for them as they attempt to dig without the excellent guidance of Andy and Ian. I will be providing updates on my Facebook page, if anyone wants to follow along there.





In the midst of the well digging and farming projects here in Burkina Faso, we attended an MTW conference which is held every four years. At this conference we were able to meet other MTW missionaries who either work in other parts of Africa or who work primarily with Muslims. Because of this, Evan's parents also traveled from Western Europe and attended this conference. It was a busy time, but we were thankful to spend time with so many fellow missionaries. After the conference, we remained for some additional family time with Evan's parents, as well as with Ian and his family, and that was a tremendous opportunity. It was a little cooler than we're used to in West Africa, but everywhere we turned we were amazed by the beauty of God's creation.

We want to thank you for your prayers and your support without which we would be unable to do so much of what we do. We pray as you head into the thanksgiving season that you will find rest and encouragement in reflecting on God's goodness to us all. We serve a loving, caring Father and we join you in praising Him in our corner of the world.

God bless,

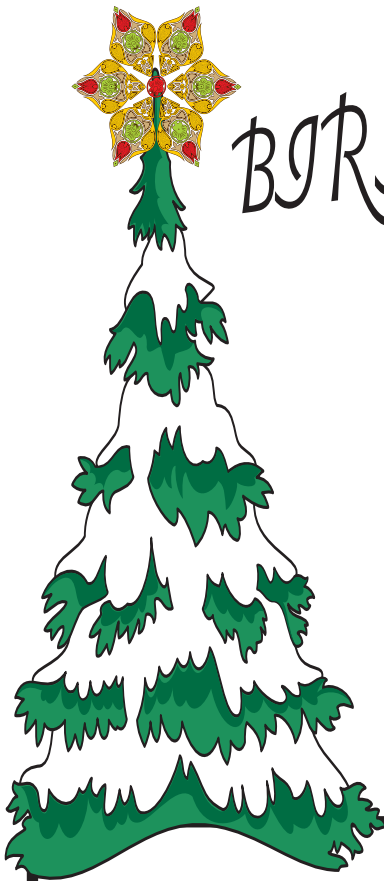
Evan, Bonnie, Charlotte, Lucas, and Aidan



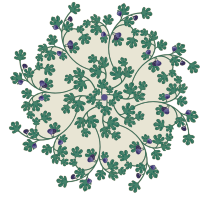
How Can You Give Financial Support

1. You can give online at www.MTW.org. To find us, put our account number 13727. You will not see our names mentioned because we are going to sensitive country, but any donations to that account number will go toward our ministry. To have the support automatically taken and applied to our support account you will need to make an account with MTW.
2. Send out a check to Mission to the World (in the memo line add: account 13727) and send the check to:

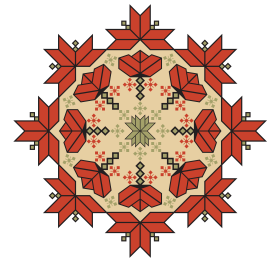
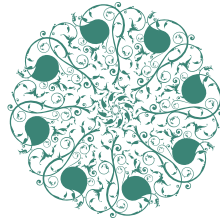
Mission to the World
P.O. Box 744165
Atlanta, GA 30374



BIRTHDAYS for DECEMBER

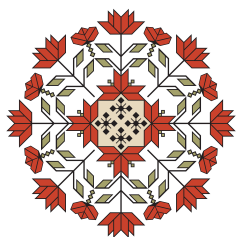


Grey Mann 1st
Melba Sipriano 3rd
Phil Harding 5th
Julia Bowden 26th
Aaron VanderKooy 28th



Dates to Remember for December

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| December 3 | Men's Breakfast at 8:00am in the Fellowship Hall |
| December 4 | Communion at the morning service |
| December 7 | Ladies Circle at 9:30am in the church parlor |
| December 10 | Ladies Christmas Luncheon at 11:00am in the Fellowship Hall. Please bring your favorite salad to share. |
| December 18 | Carol Sing at the church at 5:00pm. Reception afterwards, please bring a snack food to share. No evening service. |
| December 24 | Christmas Eve Service at 5:00pm |
| December 25 | Christmas, no Sunday School just morning service at 10:55am. No evening service. |



No Monthly Luncheon this month.





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First Presbyterian Church of Biloxi is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America. To learn more about the PCA, log on to pcanet.org

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Shannon Philio (Assistant Pastor)	228-327-3875	shannon.philio@firstpresbiloxi.org

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Phil Harding	410-310-2389	phil.harding@firstpresbiloxi.org
Steve Lustig	608-719-9372	steve.lustig@firstpresbilox.org

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Melba Sipriano	Pianist	melba.sipriano@firstpresbiloxi.org

Church Secretary

Kim Clark	228-374-6880	info@firstpresbiloxi.org
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